WHIRRAKEE

January/February 2002 Vol. 23 No. 1

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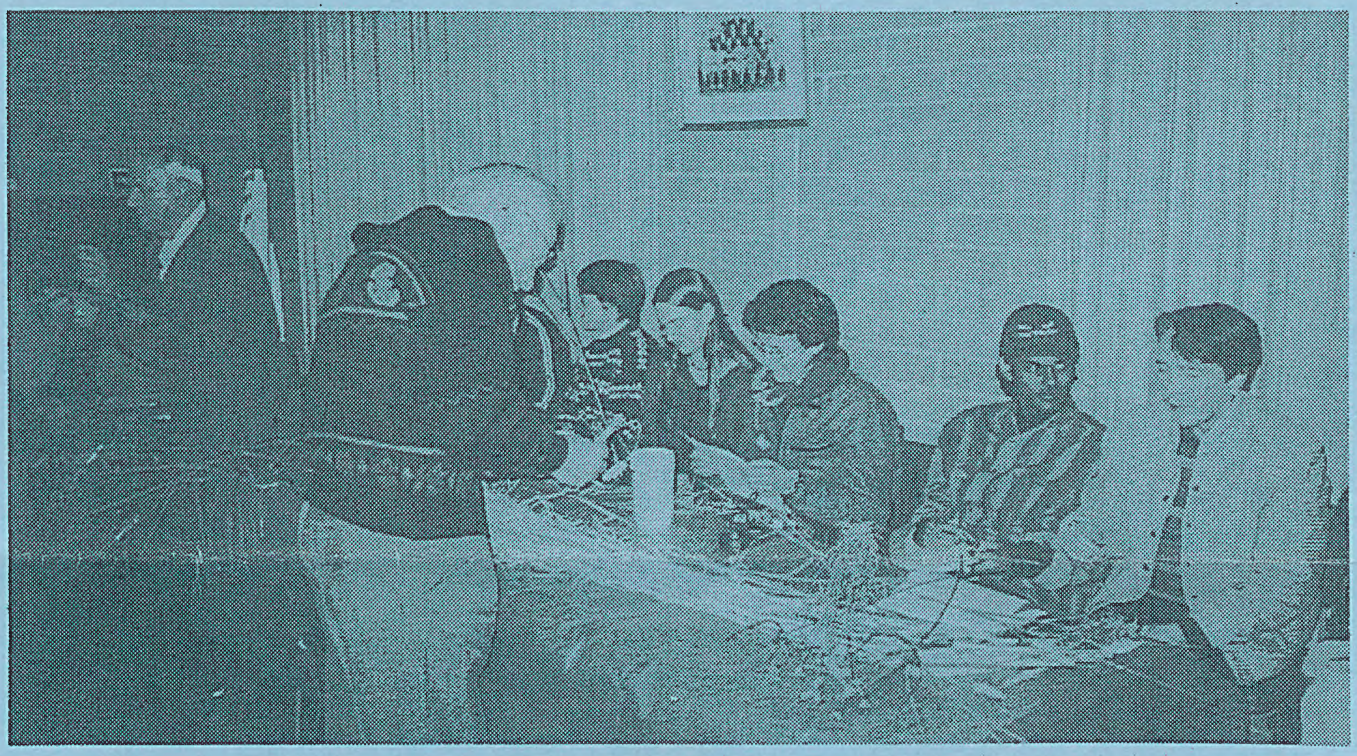

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552

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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34. These rates include GST.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. Usually, the invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised. Starting time for workshops is 7.00pm. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members:
Kate Lottkowitz; Trevor Marshall; Rob Moors, Jan Orr, Stan Pelczynski; Bob Ruddick

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active sub-group:

Mammal Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Front and Back Cover:

These photos were taken at one of the Club's workshops held in 2001. Do you know which one? Can you see yourself? If not, you might like to come to one or all of the workshops offered this year, they have been very inspiring and successful. If anybody has any suggestions as to what workshops could be held and/or offers their help to conduct one of these, we would love to hear from you.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 23, No. 1, January/February 2002

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editors' Note

Once again we have a "Letter to the Editor", this time, again, over the Faugh-A-Ballaugh article. Its author, Darren Green, did not get a chance to reply in this edition, so the conversation might be continuing. As we mentioned before, we certainly encourage this kind of interaction.

The Diary page, like this edition, is very slim. The few announcements we had almost get lost on the back page. Hopefully, we will all wake up from the 'Great Australian Sleep' and fill our next Diary Page with wondrous activities.

Brown Falcon

Author: Trish Pilling, Pillaroo Wildlife Shelter

Having the privilege of running a Wildlife Shelter has to be one of the most rewarding experiences one could ever wish to be involved in. Over the years, having taken care of a large variety of animals, it never ceases to amaze me the same exhilarating feelings I experience each time I am fortunate to re-release ready wildlife back.

On December 22nd 2001, I received a call from Lockwood South concerning a juvenile Brown Falcon with a bruised right wing and leg, not to mention it being very hungry and thin.

After confirming no broken bones at a local vet clinic he was then taken home to be rested and fed up. While in care, he consumed huge amounts of his normal diet and proceeded to be well on his way to recovery. Seven days later, time to leave, one fit, healthy bird ready for re-release back into the natural habitat.

The two people who kindly rescued him were extremely thrilled to be involved in his release, being residents of Melbourne, it was really a very special treat for them. The bird was quite happy to just take his time, looking about, preening, testing his wing strength before finally taking off.

What a sight to see, after sitting quietly for 31 min, eyes glued hopefully not to miss anything, we were well rewarded indeed! He experienced a successful stress-free release, this beautiful bird soaring high in to the sky. What a relief, many birds never get to be released back due to horrific injuries.

It is always extremely important to be aware of injured wildlife - rescued immediately and if the proper care is administered, they also may be lucky enough to be released back.

Often, I am asked if I receive payment for the voluntary wildlife care, the satisfaction and rewards are payment enough and nothing could replace that!

The property on which the Falcon was rescued has been appropriately named "Falcon Ridge" by the owners.

Errata for "Spiders of Bendigo"

Jenny Shield reported the following Errata for the recently launched "Spiders of Bendigo and Victoria's Box-Ironbark Country":

Inside Front Cover: Drawing 2: swap labels *femur* and *tibia. Patella* refers to the segment between the femur and the tibia.
Jenny has re-drawn the diagram after discovering the mistake. If you would like sheet with the corrected diagram, please contact the editors.

Page 4: 1 January should be 30 January.

Page 28: Photographs 65 and 66 are of *Ambicodamus crinitus.*
Photograph 67 is *Ambicodamus* sp.

Page 49: Change *Durodamus* to *Ambicodamus.*

Ferns in the White Hills - Bendigo Advertiser 4 Dec. 1874

Submitted by Bill Holsworth

When Carol was searching the Bendigo Advertiser for information on the history of the Chinese in Bendigo, she came across this article that may be of interest to both the Field Naturalists and the Friends of the Bendigo Botanical Gardens.

"A contributor to our horticultural column writes:- I do not think there are many persons who in passing the barren White Hills would imagine that a fine collection of ferns could be obtained there; yet such is the fact, for scores of the old shafts are teeming with them. Mr. Hyde, of the White Hills nursery, drew my attention to the fact that he had, on looking down one of the shafts, seen a fine specimen of the fern growing there. I at once suggested that we should examine the shaft to see what the fern was. Having procured a ladder and rope we made the descent. Judge of our surprise when we found upwards of fifty specimens growing there in a state of luxuriance that I have never seen excelled. We got here a splendid specimen of Gleichenia Spelunaea, with fronds three feet in

length. Side by side with this was a fine plant of Adiantum Assimile, or maiden-hair fern; two pretty varieties of Pteris were here found, with another variety of maiden-hair, with narrow but deeply indented leaves. In the same place I found two species resembling the Davallia, or hare's-foot fern. We then tried other shafts with a like success; in all we found something new. In a shaft twenty feet deep I got a fine specimen of Asplenium Flabellifolium and a fine fern, with dense pinnatified (sic) foliage; the underside of the fronds had long reddish hairs; the young curled by unexpanded fronde (sic) was entirely covered with hairs purely white. We got many other ferns of a graceful and delicate character, which were really beautiful, but I am sorry to confess I cannot name them. In all, we obtained about eighteen distinct varieties; no doubt when other shafts are examined, many other varieties will be found. To me, the sight of those ferns growing there was a wonder and a study. A wonder how they came there, and a study as to whether they are the relics of the past, or whether the seed was blown and deposited there by winds. This latter view I do not think feasible for if the seed was brought by winds, it is singular that there are many places around Bendigo with situations having all the requisites for the growth of these plants, but they are not found, with the exception of four of the varieties. In no part of the Campaspe, Coliban, Emu, Sheepwash, or Axe Creeks, can they be found. The natural inference to be drawn is that they were originally growing on the surface, and that these hills were at one time covered with dense vegetation, and the rainfall was considerably greater than at the present day, for most of the ferns found are moisture-loving subjects, and cannot exist without it, together with dense shade. Again, I noticed that when the shafts were small, and consequently more moist, the ferns were found growing in the shaft, far removed from the bottom. In one shaft, the narrowest of any we tried, they were but a few feet from the surface, and were but shade and moisture to be again there they would be in their former place, that is on the surface. To me, again, those ferns were a study, for I think it would not be possible in any part of Australia to find such a variety living together in the same habitat and in the same soil. One could imagine Gleichenia Spelunaea being there, because, as its name implies, it inhabits caverns or deep recesses under rocks; but what shall we say of the others, for they are never found in such situations? But there they are. Perhaps some one more competent than I am would enlighten us on the subject."

Observations in the Avoca Plains

Author: Rod Orr

Editor's Note: Rod Orr wrote this next bit as an aside to one of my queries last spring. I thought it was interesting and worth publishing.

Recently Jan & I spent the day walking through some fascinating remnants of Avoca Plains remnant grasslands (after spending a couple of hours driving each way to get there and back) and I'm still trying to fully comprehend being able to see in one glance up to 10 rare & threatened species of plants (there are something like 19 rare & threatened species in just one paddock that we were shown today - mind-boggling!) - & several of these, I had never seen before.

We also saw several species of *Swainsona* during our trip and I was reminded about some of the special features of a really fascinating indigenous plant, *Cressa cretica* (Cretan Weed), CONVOLVULACEAE, which frequents various types of soils in Wimmera & Mallee grasslands.

A farmer friend who showed us around today said that he has taken a metre of surface soil from areas where it grows, only to have it regrow the next season - it never seems to set seed and appears to grow by spreading underground and suckering. The surface stems and leaves are rather insignificant but the tap root is thick and very deep in the soil. He has found roots extending metres down into the subsoil - it seems to grow like a Mallee eucalypt (multiple stems from a drought-resistant rootstock) although on a much smaller scale - he wonders why it hasn't been able to colonise the entire region - a good project for someone?

Report: Productive Landcare Tour

Author: Rod Orr

The following article was published by the North Central Landcare Links Coordinator (Clare Claydon) after the Productive Landcare Tour of parts of the Campaspe Catchment last year.

On Friday Sept. 14, I attended the NCCMA & City of Greater Bendigo sponsored visit to Glen and Ann Wilkin's property at Sedgwick (South of Bendigo in the granite hills) and James Williams' property at Drummartin (North of Bendigo on the Bendigo Creek floodplain) and was asked by Clare Claydon (the North Central Landcare Links Coordinator) to write a brief report on the day's activities.

The participants were drawn from Landcare groups and conservation groups representing a breadth of interests in the Greater Bendigo region of the NCCMA; Glen and Ann Wilkin and James Williams also travelled on the bus with us for most of the day. The organisers, Clare Claydon (Landcare Coordinator, CMA) and Anthony Sheean (City of Greater Bendigo, Environment Officer) were assisted by several other speakers during the day, notably, Ian Higgins (who drew our attention to various aspects of the properties we visited, especially the nature and value of their remnants of natural vegetation) and Glenise Moors (who explained her Flame Robin trapping and colour-banding project, which uses some of Glen Wilkin's large paddocks for the study area). Everyone else was keen to participate and many interesting comments and questions were offered. Several contentious issues were also discussed during the day.

We were impressed by Glen's approach to managing the eroded gully that we visited first - he had obtained expert advice and had constructed the necessary control structures to prevent further headward erosion but had then left the downstream, badly eroded section of the gully to revegetate naturally (and slowly). The results were impressive - Drooping Cassinia (*Cassinia arcuata*) had established on many sections of the eroded banks; grasses (some pasture species and some native remnants); also various common agricultural weeds had become established over much of the banks and bed of the erosion gully; native rushes had grown quite thickly upstream of the concrete drop structure where there was virtually complete ground cover. Several native bird species were observed in and around the erosion gully - Superb Fairy Wren; Dotted Pardalote; Richard's Pippit; Welcome Swallow; Willie Wagtail.

We were then taken further into Glen's property to a rare remnant of Red Stringybark Woodland - the understorey was mainly grassy (mixed native Spear grasses and Wallaby grasses) with some scattered acacias (mainly Hedge Wattle, *Acacia paradoxa*). This woodland was being managed as just another section of a much larger grazing paddock but the longer term intention was to fence it off so that grazing of the woodland could be controlled separately. Kangaroos and Wallabies moved between Glenn's woodland and the adjoining area of State Forest and commonly grazed in this paddock.

There was some discussion about the age of the trees; the observation that you had to travel to Sedgwick to find large, old Red Stringybark trees in the Bendigo District because the State Forests had been managed to favour other eucalypt species; that the Wilkin's property had other older & much larger Red Stringybarks; about the interaction of mistletoe species with their host trees - Elvyne had noticed that Drooping Mistletoe (*Amyema pendula*) was growing on some of the stringybarks and was flowering.

As mistletoes are an interest of mine, I became involved in a brief explanation of their ecology but this was soon swamped by a more animated discussion centred on whether mistletoes were a significant cause of tree death because of the common observation that isolated trees or trees along the roadside and forest edges are often showing signs of stress, decline or even imminent death.

It is very tempting to interpret the presence of Mistletoe clumps on a tree. which is obviously suffering stress. as the cause of the stress to the tree - I tried to convince Ann Wilkin that she should not worry unduly as mistletoe species and their hosts had adapted to each other over many millions of years - if a reasonably well balanced relationship had not developed between them then we would notice the rapid disappearance of either the parasites or their hosts as one or the other became dominant (and this doesn't happen!).

There are many other factors which are important in determining the state of health of trees in forests & woodlands and especially of isolated trees and those in exposed locations along forest edges and along roadsides.
Roadworks, root disturbance, altered drainage patterns, trunk damage from contact with machines, root damage during fence construction, and many other mechanisms of disturbance, are some of the hazards to tree life along the edge of forests. In agricultural areas, soil around and underneath woodland trees is often highly enriched by nutrients from animal manures, soil is also compacted or disturbed by sheep and cattle camping under the shade of the tree canopy.

Little is known about the importance of insect attack on the leaves, stems, trunk and roots of large, old trees and of the importance of leaf-gleaning birds, tree-creepers and other bark-gleaning birds (and other animals) in reducing the numbers of insects (of all stages of development). Even less is known about the activities of predatory and parasitic insects in limiting populations of pest species, and most observers completely ignore the other forms of life such as spiders, fungi, bacteria and viruses and their impact on the health of trees unless there is a direct and obvious cause and effect association that some researcher has already discovered.

It is just a bit too simple to observe the coincidence of mistletoe clumps (even large numbers of them on a single tree) and tree stress and then to jump to the conclusion that one caused the other!

At the very least other questions should be asked. Could there be other factors which caused the decline in tree health? Could the decline in tree health have caused metabolic changes in the tree which made it less able to resist the establishment of new mistletoe clumps from germinating mistletoe seeds?

In cases where a 'valuable' tree (usually an ornamental tree planted in private or municipal gardens) has become infested with mistletoe clumps, they may be removed by removing the affected branch or branches to solve the 'problem' quite easily. Generally, it is simply not worth the time and effort and expense involved to attempt this removal on a larger scale in private or public forests and woodlands. It is much more sensible to develop a deeper understanding of the ecological interactions between mistletoes and their hosts, mistletoes and their methods of spread (most are spread by the Mistletoe Bird - a native Australian bird which is itself very widespread), and between mistletoes and their own parasites and predators (many native insects, several native bird species and even native marsupials eat various parts of native mistletoes - some are dependant on mistletoes).

It's clear where I stand on this issue isn't it? Mistletoes are an important part of the natural environment - they show ample evidence of their millions of years of adaptation and co-evolution together with many other native Australian organisms. They are well worth study and protection in their own right rather than the fear and suspicion they usually arouse.

It's a different matter entirely when you consider the possibility that mistletoe species from other countries might be introduced into Australia. There is the very real possibility that an introduced mistletoe species could create a new and different 'weed' problem but, even then, only very few mistletoes on the world scale are regarded as important parasites and worth controlling - the pine plantation industry is very vigilant in protecting itself against the micro-mistletoes of North America, which are aggressive parasites and are recognised as important economic threats to this industry (both in the US - actual threat; and here in Australia - potential threat).

Anyone who is interested can contact me for more information, references etc and follow some of these issues themselves. Back to the Productive Landcare tour...

Glenise Moors then talked to the group about her Flame Robin colour-banding project which she has been conducting on another part of Glen's property.
These birds are being studied in an effort to discover something more about their patterns of migration - they are Winter visitors to the Bendigo region and migrate back to their breeding areas in the high country but nobody knows exactly where the Bendigo visitors come from or where they go back to. If you ever see a Flame Robin, look carefully at its legs - the left leg has a silver band together with a coloured plastic band above it, the right leg has 2 colour bands. Individual birds can now be identified without having to capture them so any sighting

provides very important information - the colour bands may be in any combinations of Red, Orange, Green, Blue, White and Black. Because some of the same birds have now been positively identified at the study site several times over the last 3 years since they were first banded, the study is also providing some information about how long these birds live, how well they survive their annual migrations, the existence and stability of feeding groups of birds, gender balance, and maturation of juvenile birds.
Any sightings should be communicated to Glenise Moors, c/o Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club Inc., PO Box 396 Bendigo 3552.

After morning tea on the roadside (where I continued talking to Ann about mistletoes) we continued the bus tour to another part of the Wilkin's property and walked most of the way up Mt Prospect until we could look down over the large basin below. Glen is engaged in an extensive revegetation program to link his existing remnants of Red Gum woodland along the main drainage lines through the property - he explained aspects of this work and also of his weed control problems in this country.

We had paused for breath part-way up the first steep slope so that Ian Higgins could explain his revegetation trial using various herbicides to aid establishment of a variety of species - residual herbicides were shown to be not worth using in this context at this location, in these soils (they seemed to have caused damage to some species and to have provided no benefit compared to knock-down herbicide applications for weed control).
Ian pointed out that one of the species used in these revegetation trials and later plantings was Silver Banksia, which once had been common and widespread throughout the granite soils of the district but had been reduced to only a few individual trees which were no longer able to set seed, for reasons unknown.

This native plant is widely recognised as an important nectar resource for native birds and marsupials - its virtual disappearance from this landscape must have had profound implications for the survival of many species of native fauna.

We returned to the bus and travelled through Bendigo to Drummartin on the Bendigo Creek where we had lunch at James Williams' property.

James explained some of the drainage and flooding issues which affected this part of the catchment, including the interrelationship with Bendigo's use of Campaspe-Coliban System water and its disposal of treated waste-water into the Bendigo Creek (in the Loddon Catchment) which now transports much more water throughout the whole year, whereas it was once a much smaller and intermittent stream which dried into shallow water-holes in Summer.

Penny Walls spoke to the group about the integrated activities of the Landcare groups of this district and their success in attracting funding to fence out streamsides for better protection of remnant vegetation along streams.

Elvyne Hogan spoke about the involvement of Trust for Nature in securing Covenants for land with important remnant vegetation. She emphasised the importance of understanding that landholders remained in control of their covenanted land and managed the covenanted areas (which could be just the sections with remnant vegetation) with assistance from Trust for Nature.

Questions were asked about the costs to the landowner of the process of Covenanting -these costs are all met by Trust for Nature, also, all of the paperwork involved is handled by TfN - further details can be obtained from Elvyne Hogan, PO Box 65 Bendigo 3552.

James then took the bus out into one of his improved pastures where he and Ben Boxhall told us about Farm Forestry in this district. Ben told us of the groundwater recharge control functions of such plantations and of their potential in adding value to farm land in this and other districts.

Andrew Walls then explained the role of improved pastures in controlling groundwater recharge and of the importance of Lucerne as a component of improved pasture wherever it could be grown successfully in the region. It was interesting but disappointing to be told that only a minority of farmers seem to have adopted this approach to pasture improvement, which quite obviously has important environmental as well as economic advantages.

The last stop was in another of James' paddocks where Ian drew everyone's attention to the almost complete absence of remnant vegetation in the whole region except for narrow strips along waterways and on roadsides.
Unfortunately however, it appears that the

importance of these meagre remnants still can not be fully comprehended by the wider farming community because there was still some insistence from some of our group that the place for Fire Breaks was along roadsides and not inside the farmer's paddocks.

There was some discussion of the relative fire safety of remnant vegetation and remnants alongside green or mown pasture but some of our group still went away with their convictions unchanged.

Ian spoke with passion about the damage done to roadsides by 'Recreational Ploughing' which is continued with little or no justification on public land along roadsides - the farmers who still do this were described as those who had switched to minimal tillage or direct drilling techniques on their properties but who still couldn't give up the activity of ploughing and kept themselves occupied by destroying roadside remnants - the last reserves of natural vegetation cover (and of seed which could be collected for Landcare revegetation projects) in many districts.

The organisers were thanked, as also were the landowners whose properties we were able to visit and the other speakers who had provided such a varied and interesting program for the day. Anthony Sheean and Clare Claydon are to be congratulated for their efforts in organising and funding this combined NCCMA and City of Greater Bendigo 'Productive Landcare' tour of parts of the catchment.

If I've missed too many significant aspects of this tour it's probably because I was distracted by some of the landscapes, the Flora and, particularly, the Bird Fauna which I saw during the day (including Brown Falcons; Little Eagle at Glen Wilkin's, Black Falcon; Brown Songlark, Skylark at James Williams').

Victoria Parks Festival

Author: Alex Holt, manager, communications, Parks Victoria

Dear Secretary
Parks Victoria and the Sunday Herald Sun are pleased to announce that 'Victoria's Parks Festival' will be held for the third time on Sunday 5th May 2002. Parks Victoria would like to extend an invitation to your Club, Association or Business to participate in this event. The festival has enjoyed great success over the last two years and has grown significantly since its inception, attracting over 100 exhibitors and 20 000 visitors to the last event.

Victoria's Parks Festival is a free, one-day community based event, aimed at encouraging Victorians and visitors alike to take advantage of the diverse opportunities available every day in our marvellous parks. The action-packed day promotes the importance of a healthy and diverse park network to mental, physical and societal health through a range of activities cooperatively provided by government, private sector and the community.

The Festival offers inexpensive exposure and promotional opportunities for your group/organisation.

- Demonstrate, display and discuss your activities to a genuinely interested audience of over 20 000.
- Enjoy free display space - the only cost to you is display/activity infrastructure/equipment and, of course, your own display/activity material.
- Increase participation/memberships and broaden your contacts base.
- Develop partnerships and network with other groups and organisations.

Exhibitors range form tour operators to community groups, not-for-profit organisations, clubs, environmental management groups & local tourist organisations. The event receives substantial print media and radio coverage throughout Melbourne and has, undoubtedly become one of Victoria largest ever celebrations of the many and diverse outdoor recreational opportunities, that can be enjoyed in our magnificent natural environment.

You can obtain a Festival Prospectus and application form from the Parks Victoria website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au or contact Danni Unsworth, Marketing Officer on 03 86274818 for more information.

A Letter to the Editor

Author: Martin Downs
Parks Victoria, Ranger
Northern Goldfields Bendigo

Dear Editor

In a recent article of *Whirrakee* (August 2001) entitled "Faugh A Ballaugh Flora Reserve (Part 1)" by Darren Green, a number of inaccuracies have been noted that we believe should be corrected.

The article stated that Faugh A Ballaugh Flora Reserve is situated to the north east of Diamond Hill Historic reserve, when, in fact, the area is managed as part of the Diamond Hill Historic Reserve. Faugh A Ballaugh Flora Reserve does not exist, (despite the placement of unauthorised signage).

The article further states that the land is regulated by volunteer groups and does not come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Whilst I acknowledge and support the fantastic works undertaken by groups and individuals within the area, in February 1981, the Land Conservation Council Final Recommendations for the North Central Study Area recommended that the area (classified as uncommitted Crown Land) should be reserved for attachment to Diamond Hill Historic Reserve. In 1997, Parks Victoria assumed management for the area from the Crown Lands and Asset Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Parks Victoria currently manages this section of Crown Land as Historic Reserve.

I would also like to acknowledge that Parks Victoria is aware of anti-social activities that occur periodically within Parks and Reserves across the Greater Bendigo area. These issues, once identified, are dealt with appropriately in consultation with relevant agencies and authorities as required. Any illegal and anti social activity should be reported to the Ranger in Charge at Bendigo on 5444 6605.

Interesting and Useful Books from a Conservation Point of View

by Barbara Pelczynska

I would like to bring the following two books to the members' attention . In my view both books are very worthwhile reading because the information in them affects the way we approach the environment as individuals and as a community.

1. Blood, Kate - Environmental weeds, a Field Guide for SE Australia; C.H. Jerram Science Publishers, 2001.

Over the years Kate Blood has been involved in a campaign to educate the public, nurseries and government agencies about the need to prevent the propagation and sale of environmental weeds and their replacement in gardens with safer alternatives. As is evident from the introduction, this Field Guide is part of her campaign.

The Field Guide is divided into 5 sections - Trees; Shrubs; Climbers and Creepers; Herbs and Succulents; and Grasses. Each entry contains a photograph, general description, family, origin, weedy distribution, type of vegetation it invades, detailed description of the plant, how it spreads, its ecology and look-alike, whether it escapes from gardens, is toxic or not and its national weed status.

The introduction provides a general description of what are environmental weeds, their impacts on the environment, how they are introduced and spread and why it is so easy for them to spread. It also gives a warning about the need to be on the look out for sleeper weeds, ie. weeds which are dormant, unable to reproduce or expand their population until the right circumstances such as the right climatic conditions, pollinator or vector occur, a warning which was also given by Tim Low in his book "Feral Future, the Untold Story of Australia's Exotic Invaders".

I personally recommend that the book be widely promoted, read and of course taken notice of. It is obvious to me that any non-indigenous plant is not only displacing indigenous plants but may turn into a weed when the right conditions occur and therefore we should think very carefully about what we are growing in our gardens.

2. Yencken, David & Wilkinson, Debra - Resetting the Compass: Australia's Journey Towards Sustainability; CSRIO PUBLISHING, 2000.

According to the caption on the back cover of the book, "Resetting the Compass: Australia's Journey Towards Sustainability" sets out Australia's environmental problems in their global context and explains what is now needed to fix them. It also illustrates how ecological sustainability can be achieved together with economic, social and cultural sustainability.

The book examines the pressures on our environment from population growth, consumption patterns and technological change. It looks at the impacts on human settlements, atmosphere, biodiversity, land and inland waters and the marine environment. The specific action needed to deal with each of the problems identified are described in detail."

Of particular importance are chapters on biodiversity and on material flows and wastes. These chapters deal with the implications from loss of biodiversity, economic evaluations of ecosystems' services (the estimated value of world's ecosystems is given as being in the range of US $16 - 54 trillion per year compared with global national product of around US $18trillion), and with the modelling of human impacts on the environment (the ecological footprint of Australian population ie. the amount of land needed to supply food, forest products, water, build environments and waste assimilation capacity, is estimated to be 8.1 ha/person compared with the available ecological capacity of 9.7 ha/person; for Japan it is 6.3 ha/person compared with 1.7 ha/person available and for the world it is 2.3 ha/person compared 1.7 ha/person available showing that our development already exceeds the world's capacity to sustain us).

I strongly support the Australia's First Chief Scientist, Ralph Slatyer's recommendation that:-

"Everybody should read this book. It is a major contribution to understanding the deterioration of the earth's life support systems and urgent need to adopt policies and practices which will lead to a sustainable future."

Speaker Syllabus for 2002
First Draft

compiled by Rod Orr

A more complete version of this syllabus will appear in the March edition of Whirrakee.

February 13: Rob & Cynthia Watkins will show some of their slides combining natural history and their recent travels.

March 13: Dr Sophie Ducker - 'Floral emblems of Australia'

April 10: Catherine Fraser - 'Secret life of Compost' PhD thesis

May 8: Peter Johnson & Paul Gullan - 'The Box-Ironbark Living Records project'

June 12: Ern Perkins - 'Monitoring change in Box-Ironbark forests'

July 10: Michael Looker - The Trust for Nature and its conservation activities'

August 14: Dr Alan Yuen - 'Spineless Wonders - an introduction to the importance of invertebrates'

September 11: Annual General Meeting (no speaker except perhaps the Chairperson or another local BFNC member)

October 9: Neil Marriott - Grevillea hunting around Australia.

November 13: To be confirmed

December 11: Christmas dinner (no speaker)

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Mammal Survey Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday, February 13, 7:30pm.
In the first meeting for the year, all members are invited to bring slides along. In addition, Rob & Cynthia Watkins will show some of their slides combining natural history and their recent travels.

For speakers in subsequent meetings, see the speaker syllabus on page 10.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433

VFNCA 2002 March Camp
Volcanoes and Mineral Springs of Central Victoria

The first circular for this camp has been received. Pages 2 and 3 were printed on page 13 and 14 of the November issue, pages 1 and 4 were printed on pages 13/14 of the December edition. **The dates are 8-11th March 2002 and the camp is held at the Campaspe Downs Country Resort, 7km SW of Kyneton.** It is hosted by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. Please ring Sabine Wilkens on 54 432797 (ah) or 54 447370 (bh) to get a copy of the complete circular if interested.